

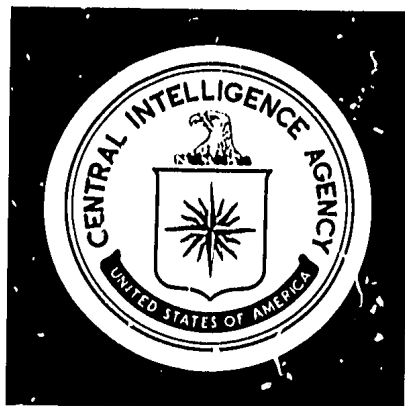
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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Memorandum

NATO's Ostpolitik

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
16 May 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

NATO's Ostpolitik

Summary

Most of the NATO allies are anxious to begin multilateral preparations for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, long advocated by the Soviet Union and its East European allies. Anticipating that such East-West talks could begin this autumn, the allies have been attempting to develop a coordinated NATO approach. At the same time, the members of the European Community (EC) have been holding consultations on a number of related issues. The NATO discussions have produced consensus on some of these issues, and the EC talks have often resulted in a unified West European position. Both sets of discussions, however, have revealed the stresses a security conference could put on the Western alliance.

NATO members are less enthusiastic about entering negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions, but feel that they must continue to pursue this NATO initiative. Although NATO has done considerable work on mutual force reduction proposals in the past four years, the allies remain divided over the general purposes and value of such reductions and, therefore, over the tactics that NATO should employ.

Almost every NATO member has a different perspective on some specific issues of both a security conference and mutual force reductions. The policies of some allies—particularly the French—will make allied unity difficult during a period of multilateral East-West detente negotiations. Effective consultations among the Western allies will be the key to NATO cohesion during this process. This memorandum examines the various national perspectives that go into NATO consultations on these issues.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.

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Background: The Harmel Legacy

1. The NATO role in detente diplomacy grew out of the recommendations of the 1967 Harmel Report. This study emphasized that even though NATO was primarily a military alliance, the political aspects of the relationship should not be neglected. It recommended that consultations on political questions be expanded to work toward a "just and lasting peace" in Europe. The allies proposed mutual and balanced force reductions as a token of their aspirations for detente. Tactically, the proposal also was an attempt to show initiative in an area then monopolized by Soviet proposals for a European Security Conference.

2. The report recognized that NATO is held together by two things: first, its ability—particularly under the US nuclear "umbrella"—to meet its members' essential security needs; and second, the allies' willingness to consult on and coordinate political and defense matters of common concern.

3. The search for detente that began in the Harmel Report is now expressed principally in the allied positions on a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions. In the next few years, the Harmel principles will be put to their most critical test. In the absence of East-West multilateral negotiations on these topics, the allies had only to formulate declarations for their ministerial communiqués, and allied unity, although tenuous at times, was nonetheless possible. Now, with a security conference likely and negotiations on mutual force reductions possible, the allies' ability to sustain defense efforts and to coordinate their national positions may come under increasingly severe strains.

Movement Toward a Security Conference

4. The prolonged negotiations on the four-power Berlin agreement gave the Western allies much-needed additional time to prepare for negotiations with the East. At least partially in response to this need the allies, following the US lead, also decided not to join in East-West preparations for a conference until the Final Quadripartite Protocol on Berlin was finally signed. Preliminary East-West multilateral talks are not now expected until this autumn at the earliest. Some of the allies would prefer not to begin talks until the summit meeting of the enlarged European Community is held in late October; the US would prefer also to wait until after its elections. Nobody expects the conference itself to be held until next year.

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5. In general, the allies think the security conference an inevitable and logical next step in the process of detente. They still have only vague conceptions of the implications of a security conference for the future of the Western alliance. Most of them realize that a new European security system is unlikely to materialize out of the conference, even though they may not communicate this skepticism to their electorates.

6. The European allies are agreed on at least two conference outcomes they wish to avoid: an interruption of West European integration or the erosion of the US commitment to Europe. What they expect to achieve, however, varies a good deal. Some allies, particularly the British, foresee little more than a propaganda show. Others, particularly the French, hope to promote more liberal policies in Eastern Europe and to loosen the Soviet hold on this area.

The EC Consultations: A New Factor

7. The members of the European Community, during The Hague summit meeting at the end of 1969, pledged to seek "progress in the matter of political unification, within the context of enlargement." Despite a desultory start to the political consultations thus required, the Six found last year that the subject of a security conference was good grist for the EC mill. In the last six months, the EC consultations have become a reasonably effective consensus-building mechanism among the Six, and with the British now joining in, among the Seven.

8. On at least three subjects related to a security conference, the EC consultations produced consensus subsequently reflected in NATO. One area of agreement is how the conference should be prepared and conducted. Last year two approaches contended for allied support. One, supported by the US, posited thorough preparatory talks, including the negotiation of texts, followed, if warranted, by a ministerial meeting to firm up the agreements. A second approach, pushed by the French, envisaged a shorter preparatory phase not aimed at producing agreed texts, followed by a ministerial meeting for a brief presentation of positions and the appointment of working groups. These groups would then work out texts to be approved by a second ministerial session.

9. While NATO was still considering these alternatives last winter, they were also raised in the EC forum. The Dutch and the West Germans attempted there to persuade the French to concede something to US desires for "thorough preparations." Paris moved in this direction, and in the

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process, won the support of all the EC members for its general approach. As a result, the US was virtually isolated on the issue this spring.

10. A second instance in which European solidarity has prevailed involved the interpretation of the NATO ministerial communiqué of last December. The allies at that time "took note" of the Finnish offer to host multilateral conference preparations and stated that "their governments... will keep in touch with the Finnish Government in order to consult on this matter." Most of the European allies interpreted this as authorization for more active contact with the Finns in Helsinki. (In the past, such contacts had been limited essentially to those initiated by the Finns.) Despite US efforts to discourage this interpretation, the EC members in their political consultations gave it their approval.

11. In the third and most recent case, it now appears that the European allies have agreed to water down the NATO proposal for a security conference agenda item on the "freer movement" of people, ideas, and information. The French have argued that a formulation as blunt as this would be immediately rejected by the Soviets. The other members of the EC and the UK, Norway, and Denmark appear to agree, in spite of US arguments in favor of the freer movement language.

12. There are a number of reasons why the EC consultants have been able to find substantial common ground on security conference issues. The conference will have an effect on the EC as well as relevance to NATO. In this respect, the EC members think that one of the Soviet objectives in a security conference will be to stymie the process of West European integration. In addition, the Europeans have become very involved in the idea of a conference, and in spite of their recognition of Soviet objectives, are generally optimistic that results favorable to the West can be obtained. All this adds up to a shared interest among the EC members in continuing their consultations on the conference, and in seeking to formulate a unique "West European perspective."

Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions

13. The acceptance by most allies of the desirability of a security conference is not matched by equal enthusiasm for NATO's own detente initiative, mutual force reductions. A good number of the allies are sympathetic to the French argument that force reductions are inherently dangerous. They are also responsive, however, to the West German argument that NATO must continue to pursue its force reduction proposals because:

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1) it is a NATO initiative; 2) mutual reductions would be better than unilateral US reductions; and 3) keeping the prospect alive helps fend off pressures for unilateral US reductions. When the Germans argue further that actual reductions at some distant time could play a useful role in East-West detente, a few allies are responsive, but a number of others, particularly the British, are skeptical.

14. In sum, the allies—with the exception of France—accept that they are stuck with the force reduction question whether they like it or not. When they get down to details, however, such as how reductions should be negotiated, when, and by whom, there are deep differences in national perspectives.

The Country Perspectives

France

15. French positions on both a security conference and mutual force reductions reflect the now-standard French advocacy of detente as a way to break down the "bloc structure" of Europe. Because Paris views a security conference as furthering detente, the French have been its leading Western advocate. At the last NATO ministerial, Foreign Minister Schumann argued strongly for early conference preparations. Paris has since taken a more relaxed approach, perhaps because of its assessment that a conference has become inevitable whether held this year or next.

16. In recent NATO discussions, the French have argued that the West should not present demands for the freer movement of people, ideas, and information in such a way that they are immediately rejected by the East. To do so, they contend, would only defeat the primary objectives of opening Soviet and East European societies to outside influences, stimulating internal forces of pluralism, and supporting East European efforts for increased autonomy from Moscow. French officials claim that they were convinced during Brezhnev's visit to Paris last fall that Moscow would never accept the term "freer movement" on a security conference agenda. On the other hand, an item on cultural relations, which the Soviets would buy, could serve to open the door.

17. Looking toward East-West conference preparations, Paris has attempted to retain as much freedom for itself as possible—an approach which continues to plague efforts to develop "coordinated" NATO positions. The French reacted with typical reserve to a Dutch paper which

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recommends that the allies consult regularly during conference preparations to help offset the "united" Warsaw Pact approach. The French representative argued that the assumption that the Pact would have an advantage over NATO was invalid and that one should think in terms of "Western" consultations including European neutrals rather than a NATO caucus, because "interests of most neutral and non-aligned countries are similar to ours."

18. Paris also resisted agreement to permit submission to a conference of the "agenda papers" the allies are currently drafting. The French insisted that there should be sufficient "flexibility" in the presentation of Western positions to allow for "national positions," and urged that any bloc-to-bloc approach be avoided. Although Paris agreed to a compromise on this question, its arguments were indicative of the independent course it intends to chart during a conference.

19. The French remain basically opposed to mutual and balanced force reductions. When the other NATO allies first began work on force reduction proposals, Paris abstained, contending that Moscow would never agree to bloc-to-bloc proposals anyway. When Brezhnev showed some interest in force negotiations last spring, however, Paris was forced to re-examine its stance. During this re-evaluation it concluded that force reductions should come only after political detente had been achieved in Europe. Otherwise, Western support of necessary defense measures would be undermined. The French believe that force reductions by and of themselves will not create detente, but Paris apparently discounts the risk that an atmosphere of detente—which might emerge from a security conference—could damage Western defense commitments even more seriously. Because the strong executive in the Fifth Republic makes the government relatively more immune to pressures for defense cuts, Paris is perhaps more confident than others of its ability to cope with this risk.

West Germany

20. For Bonn, both a security conference and mutual and balanced force reductions have fitted well into the larger mosaic of Brandt's Ostpolitik. The West Germans view a security conference as a logical way to extend Ostpolitik multilaterally, and—not incidentally—to engage its Western allies more fully in this extension. A CDU government in Bonn might take a more cautious approach. It may be, however, as Foreign Minister Scheel has stated recently, that even without a Berlin agreement, a security conference would take place because "too many historical forces are moving toward one."

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21. The West German approach operates within the bounds set by Bonn's movement toward a modus vivendi with Pankow. The delay in opening conference preparations has been useful to Bonn by allowing more time for the normalization process to be carried out before East Germany shows up as a co-equal participant in Helsinki. Bonn thus also favors keeping representation at the multilateral preparatory talks at the level of heads of mission in order to prevent the East Germans from using higher level representation to push the issue.

22. Other than the caution induced by the East German problem, Bonn has been guided largely by a desire for a "successful conference," which occasionally makes it hesitant to take positions that it thinks will antagonize the Soviet Union. The West Germans have been particularly cautious regarding the freer movement issue. Bonn would prefer that the West propose to discuss under this rubric the "development of contacts among persons," "dissemination of information," and "cultural relations."

23. Although the Germans have long supported "thorough" conference preparations, they—like their other EC partners—now favor the "French approach." Bonn claims to have significantly modified the French position to ensure sufficient discussion of substantive matters during the multilateral preparatory phase. How much impact Bonn has really had remains to be seen. Although the West Germans continue to attach primary importance to the NATO consultations, Bonn's position is increasingly influenced by its EC colleagues, particularly the French.

24. Bonn's support for mutual and balanced force reductions is based fundamentally on its conviction that the American presence in Europe is essential both to the alliance and to Ostpolitik. The West Germans initially advocated regional disarmament as a logical corollary to Ostpolitik and as a useful Western counter to Soviet calls for a security conference. As pressures mounted in the US for unilateral reductions, however, the West Germans increasingly looked to multilateral force negotiations as a way to stave them off. In the longer term, Bonn reasons that if US cuts are inevitable, they should at least be matched by some cutbacks in the East.

25. All of this does not mean that Bonn is overly anxious for reductions. Its "phased approach," in fact, envisions actual cuts as the culmination of a negotiating process which—as at least one German official has speculated—could take ten years.

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26. The British doubt that the security conference will accomplish much but want to get on with it. They think it would help satisfy the desire of the smaller European countries for a role in detente politics. But London is primarily interested in the West's putting up the best "front" at a conference, protecting vital Western interests, and getting it over as quickly as possible.

27. London's attitude has led it to accept the French approach on preparations and to acquiesce in a softer line on the freer movement issue. A British official has explained his government's reasoning in the following terms: bilateral discussions with the Soviets have revealed no intention on their part to settle "difficult issues"; because lengthy multilateral preparations are unlikely to change this, the allies might as well move expeditiously to the ministerial session; once the Soviets have had their propaganda show, it is possible that they may agree to modest concessions in the follow-on committee work and the resulting agreements would then be blessed by a second ministerial.

28. Along with this laissez-faire attitude, London has become increasingly involved in the EC's consensus-building process. Britain's "European avocation" is more and more evident as it moves into the EC's institutional house, and a "European consensus"—including the UK—on detente questions surfaces with increasing frequency in NATO.

29. While the British view with equanimity a security conference and its impact on the alliance, they are far more worried about mutual and balanced force reductions. Their military studies have convinced them that no scheme has yet been devised that would be both negotiable with the Soviet Union and compatible with allied security. London is aware of the pressures in the US for unilateral force reductions, but it is not convinced that negotiated reductions would be much better.

Other Allied Positions

30. The Italians, among the most detente-minded of the allies, share the French hope that a security conference will better the lot of the East Europeans. Beyond this, Rome is primarily interested in maximizing its role in East-West discussions. Similar considerations inspire Rome's position on mutual force reductions, and the Italians have pressed hard for a close relationship between a security conference and force reductions to ensure

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some Italian influence on the latter. Along with Turkey and Greece, Italy opposes extending the geographical coverage of force reductions to include the Mediterranean, primarily because it wants no limitations placed on the US presence in that area. But Rome has lobbied steadily to retain as much influence as possible in any negotiations.

31. The Canadians support a security conference and are among the more enthusiastic advocates of mutual and balanced force reductions. Ottawa increasingly finds, however, that its interests are tied closely to the NATO consultative process. Recognizing that they can have little impact on either the US decision-making process or on EC consultations, the Canadians must seek a maximum of influence through the North Atlantic Council.

32. The Danes and Norwegians, influenced by public and parliamentary pressures, are even more persistent advocates of detente than the Canadians. In a demonstration of enthusiasm going well beyond the requirements of Nordic unity, both Scandinavian allies sent special missions to Helsinki early this year to discuss the progress toward a security conference. The Norwegians also supported the French attempts to avoid the appearance of a Western bloc in conference negotiations.

33. The Belgians seem to feel a special obligation to keep detente rolling because of Harmel's influential role in developing NATO's commitment to it. The Dutch, on the other hand, are more cautious. They support a security conference but are particularly wary of Soviet objectives and urge that extensive NATO consultations be held at every step along the way. The regimes in Portugal, Greece, and Turkey are equally skeptical, but they play no important role in allied deliberations on these questions.

The Challenge of Multilateral Detente Diplomacy

34. "NATO positions" on a security conference and mutual force reductions are an accommodation of many national positions within broad consensus formulations. The Harmel exercise and the intensification of political consultations which resulted from it have shown that a consensus is possible, even among 15 nations with very different national capabilities and perspectives. In this sense, the debates in the North Atlantic Council are signs of vitality, not of stagnation.

35. Nevertheless, the upcoming multilateral East-West negotiations will be a real challenge for the NATO consultative process. The French will be particularly troublesome. They will be inclined to strike out on their own

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during a security conference should they see something to be gained from a show of "independence," or hope that their example will be emulated by certain East European states. NATO and EC consultations may, however, have some restraining influence on Paris. And despite the French aversion to mutual force reductions, Paris may yet decide that its influence will be greater through participation rather than abstention in negotiations.

36. The West Germans can be counted on to coordinate closely their positions in NATO and with the US, particularly regarding mutual force reductions. During a security conference, Bonn might be more inclined than others to accept agreement for its own sake.

37. If the current British attitude carries through to a security conference, London will not press very hard for much beyond a good show. The British will be strongly protective of NATO's military position in force reduction negotiations, and wary of any measures that might hinder the possibility of West European military integration.

38. Some of the smaller allies, particularly Norway, Denmark, and Belgium, will more actively seek East-West compromises. They may in fact occasionally sympathize more with the neutral participants than with their NATO allies, but NATO and EC consultations should keep them generally in step with their Western partners. The Dutch, by all appearances, will continue to see their interests best protected by close and continuing NATO consultations.

39. The Canadians, primarily interested in retaining some influence on the European detente process, probably will find this desire best served by trying to influence the over-all NATO position, rather than by following an independent course. Canada's absence from the EC consultative mechanism will incline Ottawa toward insisting on thorough consultations in NATO. Its few remaining troops in Germany assure it participation in force reduction negotiations.

40. More than the other allies, Italy may find itself torn between the requirements of alliance and its desire to have an impact on the detente process. The Italians probably would like to play an active and independent role, but they are most likely to continue to see their interest furthered through coordinated NATO and EC positions.

41. The rest of the southern-tier allies—Portugal, Greece, and Turkey—are the least likely to stray too far from agreed NATO positions during a

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conference. Their primary interest in both a security conference and mutual force reduction negotiations will be defensive, guarding against East-West agreements they consider at odds with their political orientations. (There are some aspects of "freer movement" that these governments might find incompatible with their internal policies.)

42. The longer-term impact of detente on NATO will depend on a number of factors in addition to the process of detente itself. NATO's cohesion rests in large part on the allies' assumption that it is central to their security, and this assumption in turn depends on how dependable they consider the US commitment to be. It also depends in part on the general state of relations between the US and Western Europe, including the inevitable frictions arising from the enlarging and deepening of the EC and how they are managed. Consultations in NATO cannot be expected to change allied national interests, or to divert historical trends. But they can serve to moderate the allies' pursuit of their individual interests in such a way that the common interests of the alliance are served.

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